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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**ESGR accepting Freedom Award nominations**

*National Guard and Reserve members and families encouraged to nominate supportive employers*

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is accepting nominations for the 2009 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. National Guard and Reserve members and their families are encouraged to nominate employers who have gone above and beyond in their support of military employees. Nominations will be accepted at [www.freedomaward.mil](http://www.freedomaward.mil) through January 19, 2009.

The Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the U.S. Government to employers for outstanding support of their employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve.

Previous South Dakota employers that received the Freedom Award are South Dakota State University in 2005, South Dakota Game Fish and Parks in 2006, and the Winner School District in 2008.

Recipients of the 2008 Freedom Award met with President George W. Bush and Gordon England, deputy secretary of the Department of Defense. Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Dr. David Chu presented the awards at a ceremony attended by members of Congress and senior government and military officials.

The 2009 recipients will be announced in the spring and honored in Washington, D.C., at the 14th annual Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award ceremony on September 17, 2009.

For more information regarding the Freedom Award nomination process, please visit [www.freedomaward.mil](http://www.freedomaward.mil) or contact Capt. Lona Christensen, executive director of the South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, at (605) 737-6540 or e-mail [lona.christensen@us.army.mil](mailto:lona.christensen@us.army.mil).